

'SMART' RURAL COMMUNITIES (SRC):

TOWARDS A NEW DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION?

EXPERIMENTING THROUGH A FIELDWORK ACTION RESEARCH IN COLOMBIA AND MOZAMBIQUE



FUNDACIÓN AYUDA EN ACCIÓN FOUNDATION

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- Mondragon Co-operative Corporation (Social Transformation)
- LKS Engineering/Energy
- Mundukide Foundation
- Alecop
- MSI



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Un nuevo modelo de desarrollo rural inteligente

Agradecimientos

Este presente proyecto y *policy report* hubiese sido prácticamente imposible sin el liderazgo de Fernando Mudarra y el constante apoyo operativo (y moral) de Iban Askasibar. A ellos y a tod@s l@s personas directamente (Antonio, Sneider, Jesús, Alberto, María, Jaime, etc) o indirectamente (personas de las comunidades en Colombia y Mozambique, respectivamente) vinculadas al proyecto SRC de Ayuda en Acción. Igualmente, al equipo técnico de Mondragón que nos acompañó en el intenso trabajo de campo en Colombia: Unax (Mundukide), Andrea (Alecop), y Hodei (LKS). Sin la valiosa y profesional contribución de tod@s ell@s, este *policy report* no tendría ninguna validez científica. Este proyecto es así una construcción co-operativa en red en la propia manera de desarrollarlo.

Presentación

Este *policy report* constituye la segunda parte de la colaboración entre Ayuda en Acción (liderada por Fernando Mudarra) y el Dr Igor Calzada (de la University of Oxford), dando continuidad al primer informe entregado del 15-22 de Junio del 2017 con título: 'Smart Rural Communities (SRC): Estado del Arte para un proyecto de diagnóstico/intervención y trabajo de campo basado en *action research* en Colombia y Mozambique'.

El trabajo de campo se ha venido recogiendo con el hashtag #SmartRuralCommunities en Twitter y también de manera sintética en:

<https://www.igorcalzada.com/smart-rural-communities-action-research-intervention-project-in-colombia-latin-america-mozambique-africa/>

ABSTRACT

- This project aimed at conducting fieldwork research in several rural and remote communities in post-conflict areas in Colombia (Latin America) and newly developed areas in Mozambique (Africa). By doing so, this fieldwork research provided qualitative insightful data to shape an intervention experimental model entitled 'Smart Rural Communities' (SRC). Ultimately, the project not only aims at reverting the Smart-City-Global-North logic in developing countries but also to establish an ad-hoc contextualized version for the rural communities in several strategically-targeted locations of the Global South. The overall framework of this project encompasses the 17 SDGs and the New Urban Agenda-Habitat III coordinated by UNHabitat (Robin, Steenmans, & Acuto, 2017).
- This project is led by the NGO Ayuda en Acción (Aid-in-Action), based in Spain, which has employed and deployed the resulting and strategic outcome internationally among their territorial development areas and branches. Despite the fact that the NGO has been operating internationally with a vision characterized by action-driven international aid, this project enhances the potential strategy of the NGO by adapting the 'smart' use of the ICT, energy, mobility, education, health, gender equality, youth and women entrepreneurship, and governance advancements jointly with a participatory and experimental methodology based on 'Rural Living Labs' (Scholl, 2017). Hence, this project envisages an update for the way the NGO Ayuda en Acción operates as an international organization for development and humanitarian aid (Mudarra, 2018).
- This applied research project consists of three phases: (i) state-of-the-art, (ii) fieldwork research, and (iii) experimentation/modelisation. The fieldwork research was conducted by using three techniques: (i) visual ethnography, (ii) in-depth interviews, and (iii) Living Labs in combination with focus groups (as a real-time methodological attempt to experiment what 'Rural Living Labs' should mean in this specific project) (Keith & Calzada, 2017). This project shows a policy commitment in renewing strategically and operatively the intervention model of the NGO Ayuda en Acción by including ultimately some lessons learnt from the ground for both infrastructure and community capacity building. This project will seek a strategic alignment with some supranational institutions in this field, such as BID (Inter-American Bank for Development – Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo) (Levy, Anaya, & Vieira de Carvalho, 2017; Terraza, Rubio Blanco, & Vera, 2016), CAF (Development Bank of Latin America – Banco de Desarrollo de América Latina), EU, UN and OECD, among others.
- In the two aforementioned cases, participants were local residents in rural, poor, and remote communities ('*rural citizens*'). The research is particularly interested in analysing their perceptions and how their daily life could be improved by scaling up from technological advancements. However, the fieldwork *action research* process substantially identified groups of stakeholders in order to examine (i) their mutual inter-dependencies and (ii) communities' path-dependencies in enhancing the community empowerment stemming from opportunities provided by smart

strategies and co-operative social economic formation from scratch (Keith & Calzada, 2018).

- As such, two groups of stakeholders were given particular consideration and targeted alongside the process of intervention: Millennials (young people with highly transformative capacities) and women (emancipating and empowering them in the community's collective decision-making processes). (i) For the first group of stakeholders, particularly in Colombia, it is remarkably challenging that young entrepreneurs are returning from the cities to their villages after a long period of being absent in their communities, due to the conflict. (ii) In Mozambique, the role and the way the project could engage women is intriguing given the agriculture associations run collectively by them. In both cases, there is great potential about the participation of these target groups.
 - Ultimately, the project attempted to encourage '*rural citizens*' to initiate their own entrepreneurial ideas by being supported with experts and technical professionals in the fields of energy, entrepreneurship, and education. In this endeavour, participants took part in diverse research activities in their community in reflecting collectively on their present and future living and working conditions overall. The general 'umbrella' of the project is thus SRC and the specific way to intervene was established as 'Rural Living Labs'.
 - The fieldwork and the research design was scientifically conducted by [Dr Igor Calzada, MBA](#) from the [University of Oxford, Urban Transformations ESRC](#) [alongside the spin-off [TransLoKal](#)]. The project is led by the NGO, Ayuda-en-Acción (Aid-in-Action), its CEO, [Mr Fernando Mudarra](#), by being coordinated with regional branches operatively by Mr Iban Askasibar: (i) first, with [Ayuda-en-Acción Colombia](#) (Mr Antonio Ventura) and the local partners [Fundación Semana](#) and CDS, from 9th to 17th July 2017; (ii) second, with Ayuda-en-Acción Mozambique (Mr Jesús Torr  s and Jaime D  az) and the local partner muleide, from 20th to 27th August 2017.
 - In the first fieldwork in Colombia, a group of professionals from the [Mondragon Co-operatives](#), such as the engineering and consultancy co-operative firm [LKS](#) (Mr Hodei Arzak), [Alecop Colombia](#) education co-operative (Ms [Andrea Angarita](#)), and [Mundukide Foundation](#) NGO co-operative ([Mr Unax Zabala](#)), among others, took additionally part, also giving technical and expert advice to the communities in the fields of engineering, education, socio-economic/production-based co-operation and co-operativism being coordinated by the University of Oxford.
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